तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Issue No. 116 *Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications*

27 November 2005 *Śrī Utpannā Ekādaśī*, 12 *Keśava*, 519 *Gaurābda* Circulation, 1642

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THE RIVER OF NECTAR

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

In the fourth canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, twenty-ninth chapter, verse 40, the importance of hearing the pastimes of the Lord is stated by Sukadev Goswami to Maharaja Parikshit: "My dear King, one should stay at a place where the great *ācāryas* [holy teachers] speak about the transcendental activities of the Lord, and one should give aural reception to the nectarean river flowing from the moonlike faces of such great personalities. If someone eagerly continues to hear such transcendental sounds, then certainly he will become freed from all material hunger, thirst, fear and lamentation, as well as all illusions of material existence."

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also recommended this process of hearing as a means of self-realization in the present age of Kali. In this age it is very difficult to follow thoroughly the regulative principles and studies of the Vedas which were formerly recommended. However, if one gives aural reception to the sound vibrated by great devotees and *ācāryas*, that alone will give him relief from all material contamination. Therefore it is the recommendation of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that one should simply hear from authorities that are actually devotees of the Lord. Hearing from professional men will not help. If we hear from those who are actually self-realized, then the nectarean rivers, like those that are flowing on the moon planet, will flow into our ears. ❀

— The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 10.

LEVELS OF GURUS

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Devotee: It is said that guru is one. How do we understand that in the presence of different bona-fide spiritual masters? Is there any specific distinction?

Gour Govinda Swami: Is the Lord one or many? *advaya-tattvam ekam eva dvitīya nāsti* — The absolute is one, not many. But those who do not know this *tattva* say, "Oh, there are many gods. Rama is a god, Nrisimha is a god, Vamana is a god, Matsya is a god." They are confused. But if one understands in *tattva*, then there is no confusion. As the Lord is one, so also the guru is one in *tattva*, but there are different manifestations. A conditioned soul cannot understand this. By the mercy of the guru one receives this *tattva-jñāna*.

Devotee: So there are different varieties of gurus?

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes.

Devotee: Can we say that among them there are different levels of advancement—*madhyama-adhikāra, kaniṣṭha-adhikāra?*

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, different levels of advancement are there. As one deserves, one gets. As an example, a shopkeeper may have varieties of commodities, first class, second class, and third class. Different customers want different qualities of commodities. The

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shopkeeper wants to dispose of his goods, so he shows you a third-class item and tells you it is first-class. In this way he tests to see whether you want third class or first class, and how much you can afford.

If, after seeing his goods, you say, "No, I don't appreciate this. Do you have anything better?" Then the shopkeeper replies, "Better things are there, but the price is more—fifty dollars." If you can afford it, you say, "All right, show me." Then he will show you something superior.

And then if you again say, "No, no. I want something better."

"I have something better than this, but the price is one hundred dollars."

If you are prepared to spend the money, you will say, "Yes, I want that thing." Then he shows you the best quality. So varieties are there, it is up to you to decide what you want.

Devotee: Where do we get the money to make our purchase?

Gour Govinda Swami: You have to earn the money, otherwise how can you purchase the commodity? It is up to you what variety you want. One who is really crying thinks, "I want the best. I don't want second class or third class. I want the topmost." Krishna knows your heart, so he makes an arrangement. It is up to you. What you desire, you get. Krishna knows what you deserve and he makes an appropriate arrangement for you. If Krishna sees, "This fellow is not serious. He is just speaking externally. He is not crying in his heart. He wants to be cheated." Then Krishna tells *māyā* to make an arrangement and you are cheated. As you deserve, you get.

Hypocrities and Pretenders

Devotee: Prabhupada used to give the example that sometimes persons posing as *sādhus* go to holy places, and also some frivolous women go just to capture a *sādhu* so that they can have a son. However, the person who is posing as a *sādhu* is not really a *sādhu*.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, he is a hypocrite, a pretender. There are many pretenders and many hypocrites. But a real *sādhu* is very rare. Still, genuine *sādhus* are there. If there were no sun and moon how would this cosmic manifestation go on? Similarly, if there were no *sādhus* how would Krishna's *saṁsāra*, Krishna's *līlā*, go on? Because we are conditioned souls, our vision is defective. Even though a *sādhu* may come before us, we cannot see him. Therefore, one should not say that there are no *sādhus*. Instead, one should say, "I am a blind person. I cannot see a *sādhu*." Then one will be very eager to acquire such vision.

Only by the help of the sunshine can you see the sun. Similarly, only by the mercy of Krishna can you see him or understand him. That mercy is received through a pure *sādhu*. Only by the mercy of a *sādhu* can you see or understand Krishna. You cannot understand Krishna through your intelligence or merit. You cannot see him by your vision. You are not the seer. Krishna is the seer. *Sādhu* is the seer. You are to be seen. You think it is just the opposite, so you are cheated. You have no vision, how can you see? This is our *vaiṣṇava* philosophy. This is Mahaprabhu's teaching. We are very proud of our senses. We want to see. We want to perceive through our senses, but they are defective. The only thing required is to cry before Krishna from the core of the heart. Then Krishna makes a perfect arrangement. Those who have cried, they have gotten. Those who have not cried, they have not gotten. You have to cry, then you'll meet guru. By guru's mercy, you'll get Krishna. *Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā* and *guru-kṛpā* are interrelated. In Mahaprabhu's teachings to Rupa Goswami in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* he has said, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* — by the mercy of guru and Krishna one receives the seed of the devotional creeper. First comes *kṛṣṇa-kṛpā* by which you meet guru, and then, by the mercy of guru, you get Krishna. That is our process.

Mercy and Cheating

Devotee: I have heard that the disciple has to be very serious.

Gour Govinda Swami: If one is not serious one cannot get anything. You should understand that the *sādhu* has two things: *kṛpā* and *vañcanā*. *Vañcanā* means cheating. One who deserves *kṛpā*, mercy, gets it. One who deserves cheating, he is cheated. The example is Pundarik Vidyanidhi. Pundarik Vidyanidhi was a very elevated devotee, a *mahā-bhāgavata*. However, if anyone would see him they would think he was a *bhogī*, an enjoyer. He would wear costly garments and keep valuable rings on all ten fingers. He would sit on an opulent cushion and chew *pan*, spitting in a precious pot made of gold and *aṣṭadhātu*. How is he a *mahā-bhāgavata?* Externally he seemed to be a *bhogī*. But what was inside no

one could understand. Only one who has vision can understand and see his real form. Those who only see what is on the outside are cheated. Many people are not serious to see the real thing. They only want external things. They want to be cheated, so that's what they get.

Once, Mukunda told Gadadhar Pandit, "Let us go and take association of Pundarik Vidyanidhi. He is a *mahā-bhāgavata*." When Gadadhar Pandit arrived there he only saw these outward things, and in his mind he thought, "What has Mukunda told me? He is a *mahā-bhāgavata?* He is a *bhogī*!" Mukunda could understand what Gadadhar was thinking, so he immediately recited a verse from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.2.23):

aho bakī yaṁ stana-kāla-kūṭaṁ
jighāṁsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī
lebhe gatiṁ dhātry-ucitāṁ tato 'nyaṁ
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajema

Bakī means Putana, the sister of Bakasura. To kill baby Krishna she smeared a very dreadful poison on her breast. She then allowed Krishna to suck her breast. But what did Krishna do? Krishna sucked her breast, and along with it he sucked out her life air. She died, but as she had done the work of a mother, Krishna gave her the position of mother. Therefore this verse is saying, "Is there anyone to take shelter of who is more merciful than Krishna?"

As soon as Mukunda spoke this verse, Pundarik Vidyanidhi became ecstatic. He rolled on the ground and tears came from his eyes. All of the *aṣṭa sāttvikā bhāva* symptoms were manifest in him. He tore his opulent cushion, smashed his spitting pot, and rolled on the ground crying.

Gadadhar Pandit thought, "Oh, he is a genuine *mahā-bhāgavata*. I have committed a great offense thinking him to be a *bhogī*. Unless he punishes me, how will I be free of the reactions to this offense? I must become his disciple. Then he will catch hold of my ear and slap me. He will inflict discipline on me, and in that way I'll be freed from my reaction." Therefore Gadadhar Pandit took mantra from Pundarik Vidyanidhi and became his disciple.

So Pundarik Vidyanidhi's external appearance was cheating, but his inner nature was different. Who could see it? Therefore, *sādhu* has two things, *kṛpā* and *vañcanā*—mercy and cheating. If someone only wants external things, he is cheated. And if he wants inner things, he gets mercy, *kṛpā*. Therefore, I say you deserve what you get. Krishna knows what you want and what you deserve. A suitable arrangement will be made for you. Although there are many thousands of Prabhupada disciples, how many have gotten real mercy? One says, "Don't you know who I am? I am a Prabhupada disciple!" In actuality, he is suffering and suffering. Now he has become a *karmī* and is gliding down to hell. Why is this? If you are not serious you cannot receive mercy. You are such a rascal! He gave you mercy, but you cannot receive it. You are so unfortunate. Sometimes I become amazed! How is it that these Prabhupada disciples cannot understand this point? If you are serious, if you are hankering and crying in your heart, then mercy and help is always there. It is hanging like a rope in front of you — you just have to grab it. However, you are careless, you are not serious. Therefore, although it is hanging right in front of you, still you cannot have it.

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada gave the example of how a doctor can recognize another doctor, a businessman another businessman.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, because they have the vision. If you have no vision you'll only misunderstand, and misunderstanding is poison. This is going on. ✡

— Excerpted from chapter seven of *The Process of Inquiry*. Gopal Jiu Publications. Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. 1998.

The False Sannyasi

Rev. A. G. Atkins

Mr. A. G. Atkins was a Britisher and a Christian missionary who first came to India sometime before 1916. In order to meet the language study requirements of a missionary he began to read the Hindi version of Ramayana *composed by the poet Tulsidas. He quickly became attracted to the story and devotional spirit of the story of Lord Rama and began a careful study of the book that continued for over twenty years. In 1941, on the suggestion of a friend, he began to translate it into English verse. He spent 12 years working on his poetic translation and finally saw the book published by the* Hindustan Times *in June of 1953. The following is an excerpt from book III, chapter 13.*

Now, when Ravan saw that his way had been cleared,

He in hermit's guise there before Sita appeared;

He who kept gods and demons in such total fright,

That they ate not by day and could not sleep at night,

Himself now afraid, like a dog that is seeking

To steal, looking all ways, came furtively sneaking;

His feet set in evil ways, counting no cost,

Ev'ry trace of strength, wisdom and glory now lost,

He told stories to Sita of customs and laws,

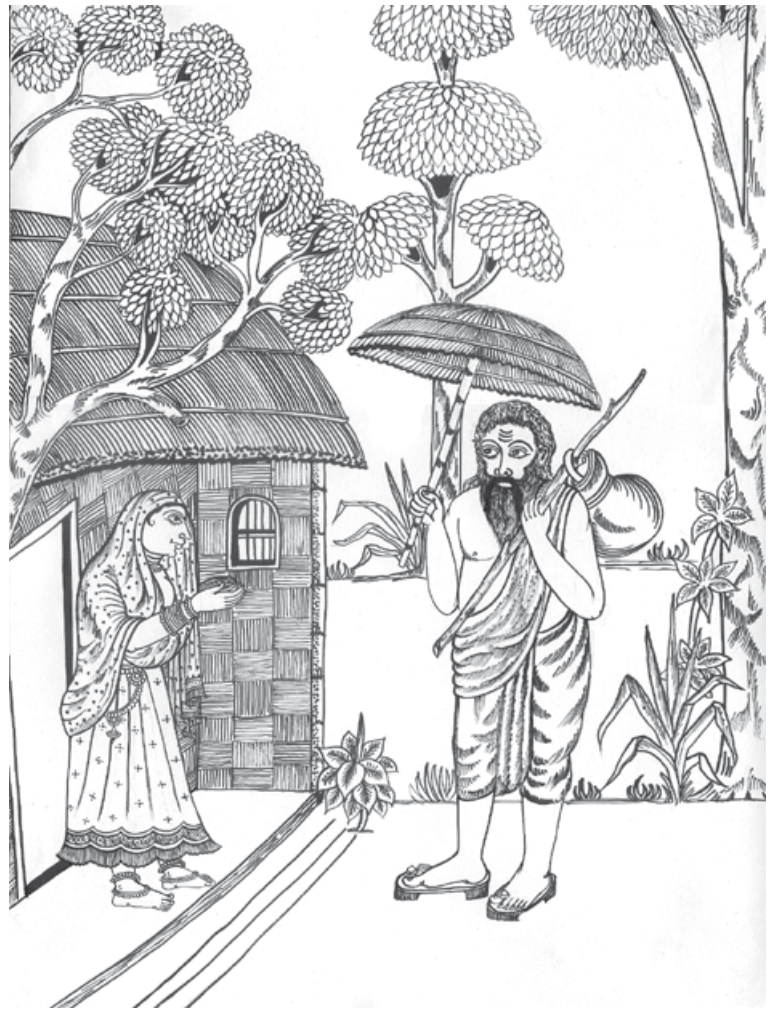
Giving kindly ways, threat'nings and love as his cause;

She replied, "Tho' in guise of the saintly you speak,

"Full of evil and wrong are the things that you seek."

Then his true name and form demon Ravan displayed;

Sita, seeing and hearing, was deathly afraid;



Drawing by Gokul Bihari Pattnaik

Ravana came before Sita in the guise of a sannyāsī

She replied, as she rallied her courage and will,

"Wretch! My husband is coming! Stand off and stand still!

"You are doomed, demon ruler; you're now well-nigh dead,

"Like a rabbit that would with a lioness wed."

At these words shame and wrath moved him more than before,

At heart feeling, "Here's one to enjoy and adore!"

Then he seized Sita roughly and angrily, and in

His chariot waiting there placed her;

Altho' from his trembling he scarcely could drive,

Thro' the air to his dwelling he raced her.

— Pages 885-6. *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*. Published by Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva-sansthan. Mathura, India. 1987.

SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by:
Gopal Jiu Publications
c/o Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir
National Highway No. 5, IRC Village
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, 751015
Phone: (0674) 2553250, 2557026
Email: katha@gopaljiu.org
Website: www.gopaljiu.org
Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

Gopal Jiu Publications is a branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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